

CORPS OF ENGINEERS, PASSAIC RIVER PROJECT,
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

ASBESTOS DUMP ON THE PASSAIC RIVER

3727

The Passaic River Coalition submitted an evaluation to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, with regard to the initiation of a citizen participation program, which would allow input from the public on the Passaic River Corps project. In theory the program is commendable, but will be unsuccessful unless there is first an evaluation of staff capability to follow through on the preliminary draft outline. They must be knowledgeable with the river system, the project, and the Congressional mandate and constraints.

Public understanding, trust and mutual cooperation is a critical element in this program and needs further clarification.

The Corps must educate the public in terms of problems, needs and Congressional mandates as they pertain to the Passaic River Basin.

The river's urban location calls for a sophisticated public participation program. This can be done only by a commitment to the river system through economic, social, political and environmental approaches.

October 10, 1978 marked the one year anniversary of the Passaic River Coalition's notification to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection that there exists an asbestos dump, approximately thirty feet high and extending three hundred feet along the Passaic River in Millington. On the first anniversary another letter was sent to the Office of the Public Advocate urging immediate enforcement action. During October the asbestos was still leaching into the river which serves as a potable water supply. In addition, former National Gypsum Company employees have informed the Passaic River Coalition that other chemicals were pumped into the asbestos.

What action the Department of Environmental Protection has taken on this information is unknown. The Passaic River Coalition will continue to monitor the situation.

PASSAIC RIVER CITIZENS TASK FORCE - FLOOD CONTROL

THE PRELIMINARY PLAN OF STUDY by the Army Corps of Engineers is being distributed and meetings are being planned to discuss and respond to questions from the public. As a result of extensive discussion by the Passaic River Task Force, Deputy Commissioner Betty Wilson wrote a letter to Colonel Clark H. Benn indicating that "It should be perfectly clear to the most casual reader that Plan II-B is not under consideration as an alternative in all or part."

Dirk Hofman presented an overview as to the application of the \$25 MILLION BOND ISSUE, which had been passed by the voters in November. Three million dollars would be utilized for staff and planning, and \$22 million for matching grants. The draft rules are being developed and will probably suggest a \$1 million limit for projects. Counties can apply for some of the planning money in matching grants to do consultant-type work for the State.

FLOOD PLAIN DELINEATIONS are nearly complete in most areas and hearings should begin in early 1979.

"Nature has made neither sun, nor
air, nor waves private property;
they are public gifts." -- Ovid



Close-up of asbestos in Millington, New Jersey

**NORTHEAST 208 AREA WIDE WATER QUALITY
MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROGRAM POLICY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)**

September, October and November, 1978

The ENERGY Policy adopted by the PAC, recommends that:

"In setting priorities for funding water pollution control projects, the DEP ranking system shall contain a significant negative factor for projects which promote secondary impacts resulting in inefficient use of energy.

"The DEP shall develop (with the advice of the New Jersey Department of Energy) guidelines for evaluating the Net Energy Efficiency of a water pollution control project. Furthermore, the DEP shall require that an assessment of Net Energy Efficiency be performed as an integral part of all 201 facilities planning."

The DRAFT STATE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE PLAN of September, 1977 was discussed and a position statement by the Ad Hoc Committee presented. Portions of this statement, which later passed unanimously and has been sent to all municipalities in the Northeast, follow:

"...The Draft plan must receive further public exposure.....

"From the perspective of water quality, which is the focus of the 208 planning program, the Draft Plan is inadequate, incomplete, and unacceptable as the land use element for 206 water quality planning...

"The Draft Plan has ignored natural and critical features to an extent that further intensification or encouragement of these patterns will create additional and more severe water quality problems.

"Critical area designation, as defined in the critical area implementation statement of the Policy Advisory Committee, must be included in the planning process. In addition, special attention must be given to the protection and management of ground water resources and all forms of wetlands, such as Great Piece Meadows...

"The Draft Plan must place a greater emphasis on the need to identify and locate critical areas within the proposed growth areas, the development of which would impact on the water quality...

"A Guide Draft Plan, as a charter for the future, should reflect economic, environmental and social objectives. Although the Draft Plan does recognize some economic interests, it should be broadened to address the full range of impacts to society as a whole by placing at least an equal value on environmental and social needs..."

"CRITICAL AREAS MAP" (see sample insert) was developed by PAC members Diane Nelson (Boonton), Loraine Caruso (Morris Highlands Audubon), Obie Ashford and Bob Glennon (Soil Conservation Service).



LEGEND
Morris County Critical Areas Map



Water Courses
Water Bodies



Steep Slopes
Rocky Outcrops



Aquifer
Recharge



Floods Seldom
But Ponds



Developed
Aquifer Recharge



Floods
Frequently

① ② etc.

Municipal Wells

The PAC agreed that the use of critical areas mapping, as a significant tool for sound future land use decision making, is to be encouraged. The basis for the process is data from the U.S. Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey. The example of the critical areas map may be viewed as a conservative estimate of critical areas, since they relate only to soil characteristics that affect water quality on the surface. Additional information delineating vegetation, wildlife habitat, geology and hydrology may further adjust the areas designed as critical. The Land Use Committee will refine definitions and develop policies related to the mapping process.